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(54) **MOBILE USER INTERFACE SYSTEM AND METHODS THEREFOR**

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See application file for complete search history.

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(62) Division of application No. 14/579,705, filed on Dec. 22, 2014, now Pat. No. 10,097,542.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

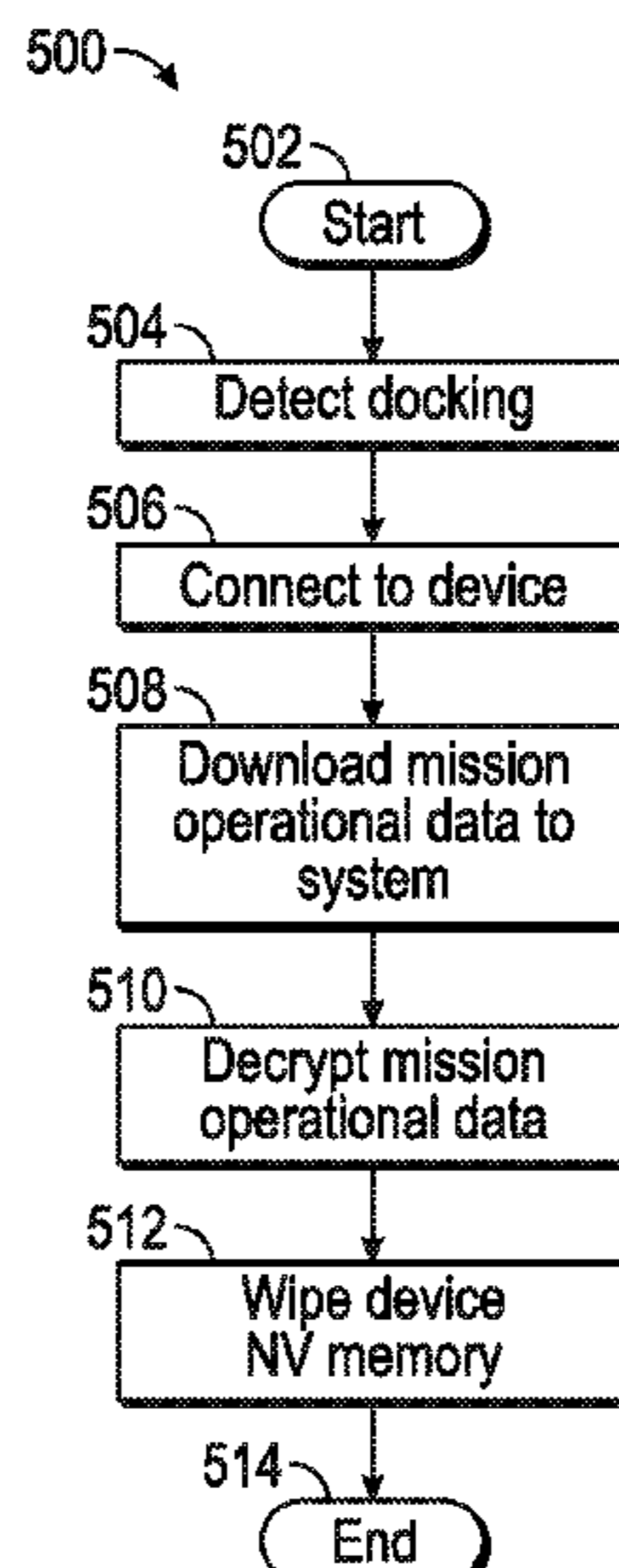
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G06F 12/14 (2006.01)

At least some embodiments are a method including connecting a mobile computer system to a vehicle computer system, wherein the vehicle computer system does not include a display device. Mission control data is received from the vehicle computer system, the mission control data generated by one or more vehicle I/O sensors coupled to the vehicle computer system. The mission control data is displayed on a display device of the mobile computer system.

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9 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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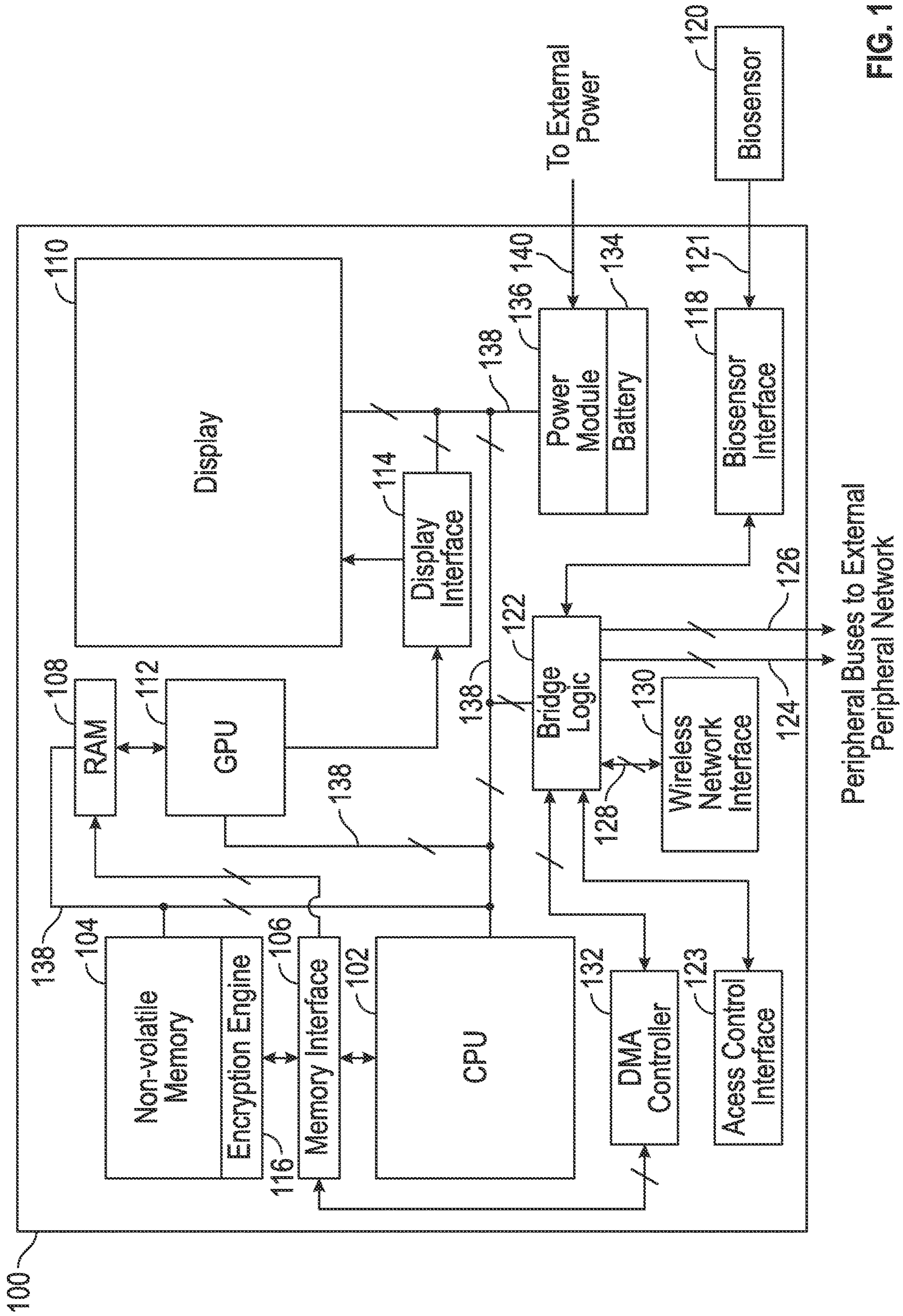


FIG. 1

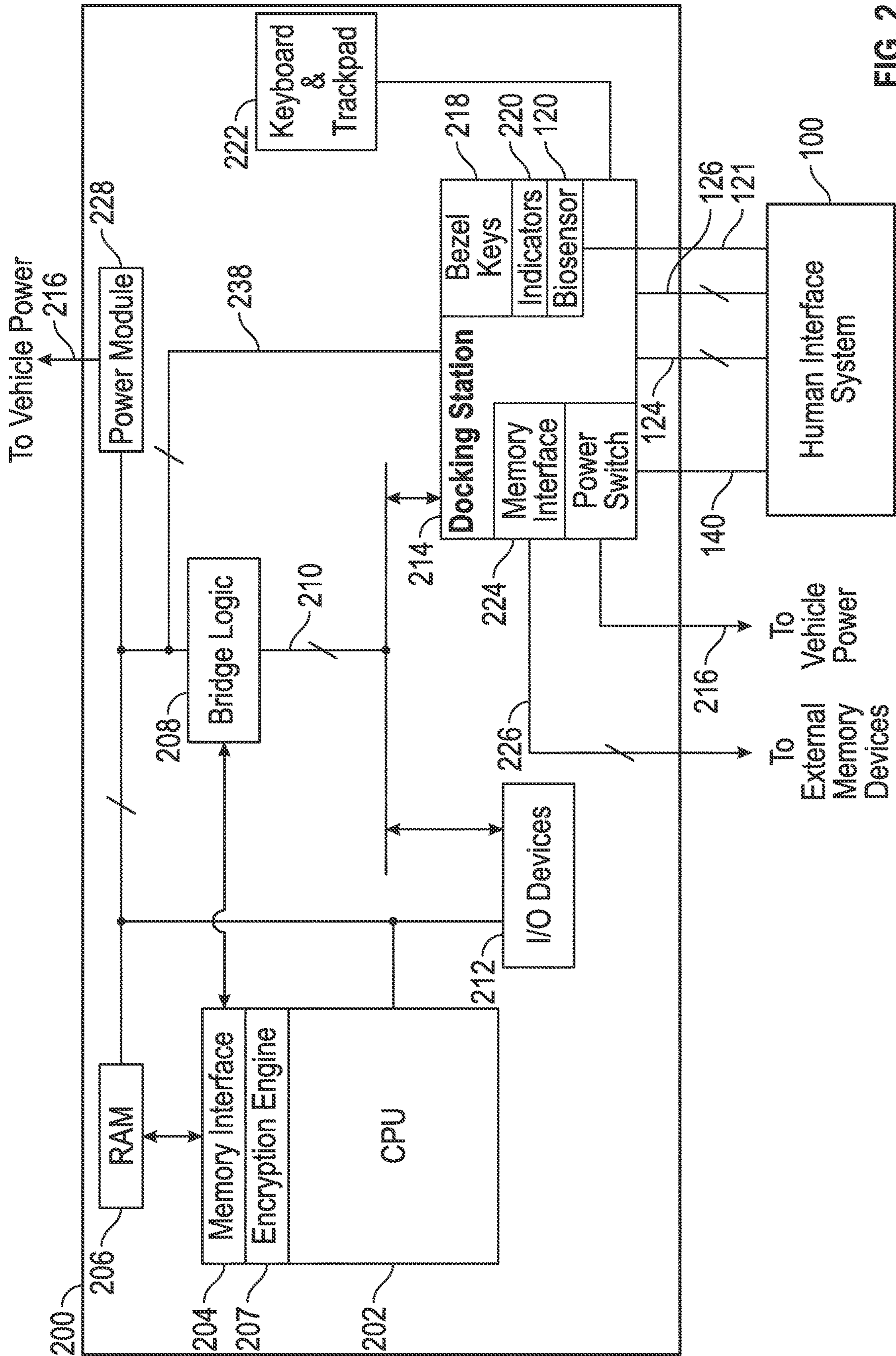
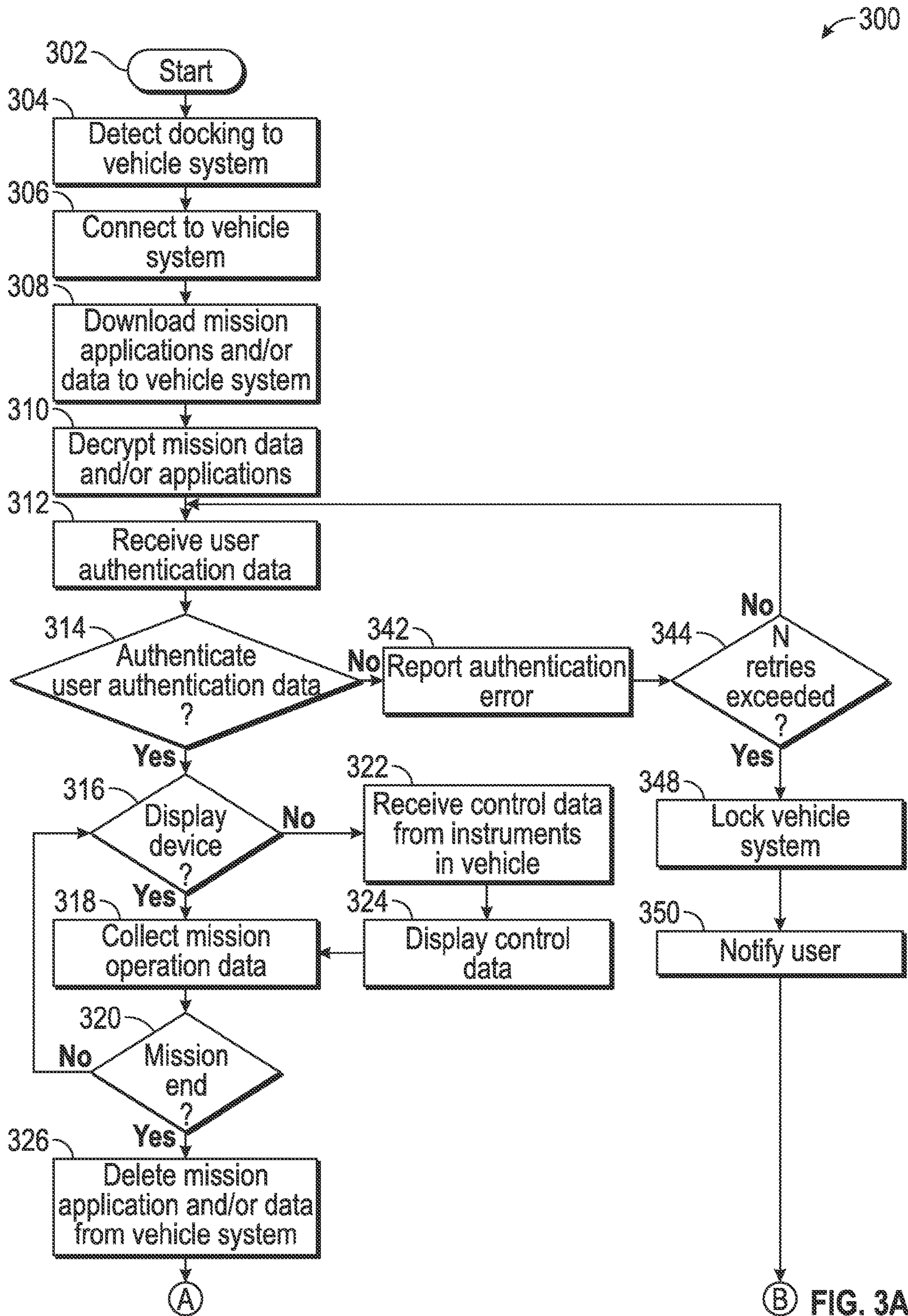


FIG. 2



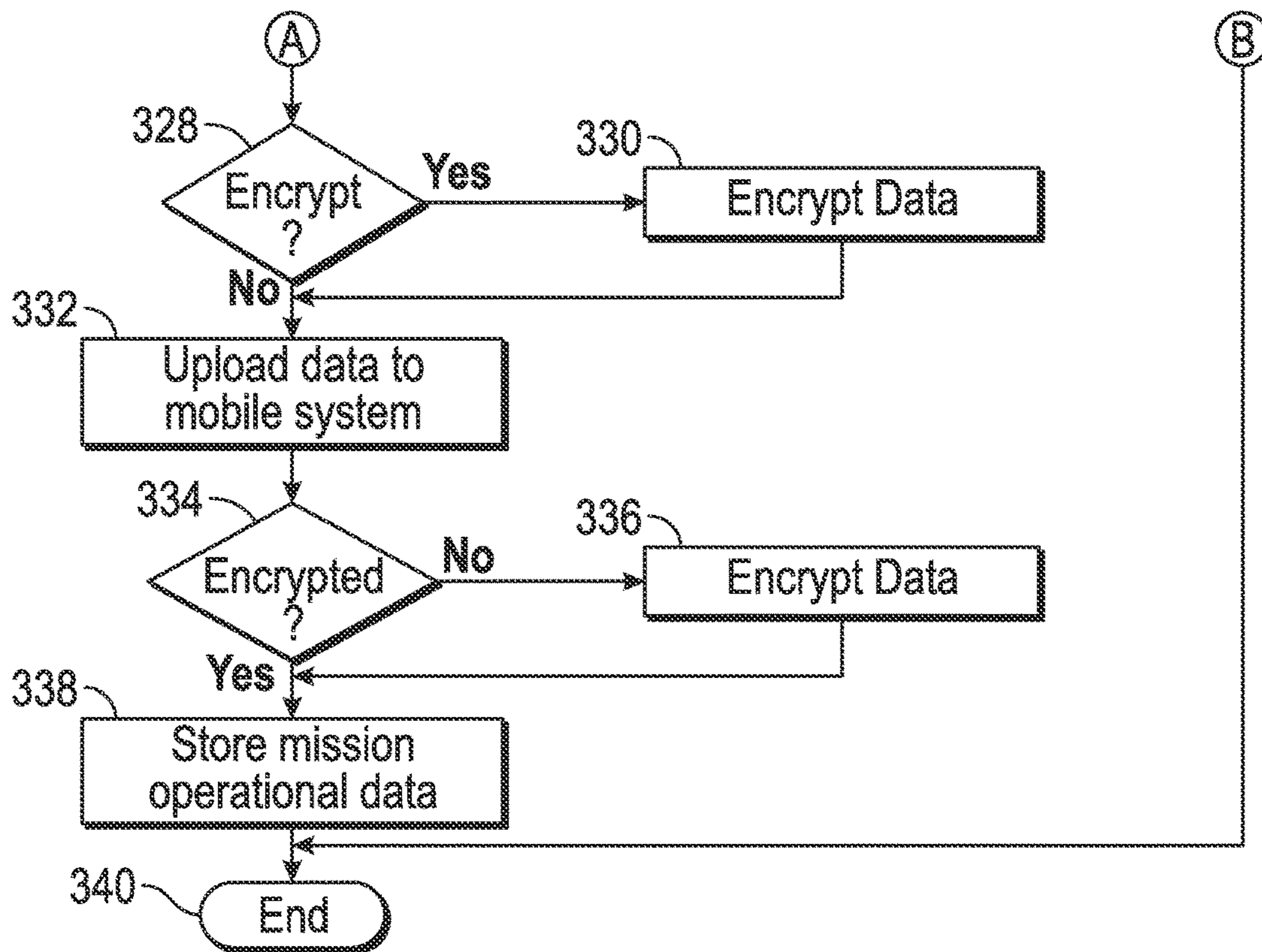


FIG. 3B

400

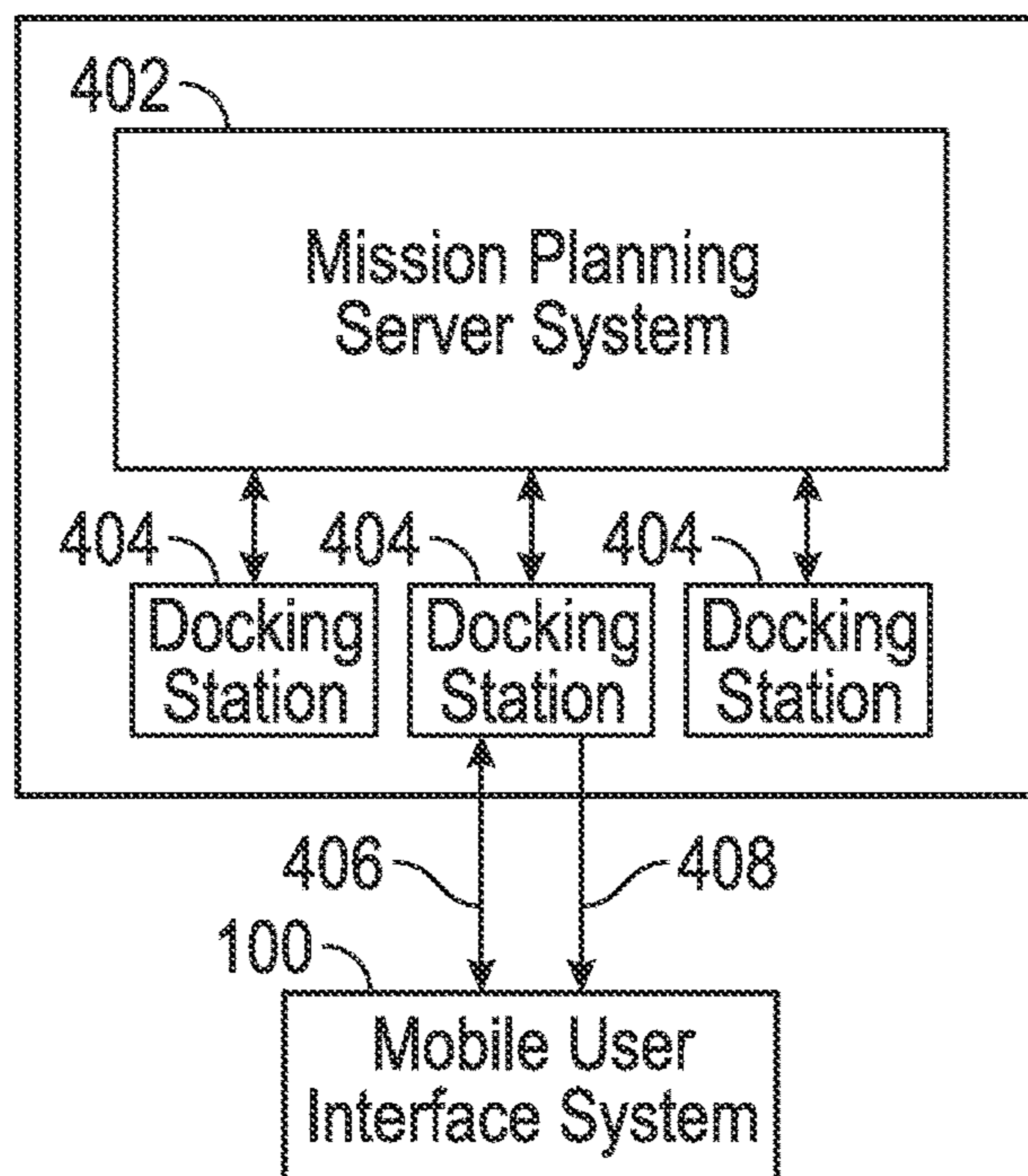


FIG. 4

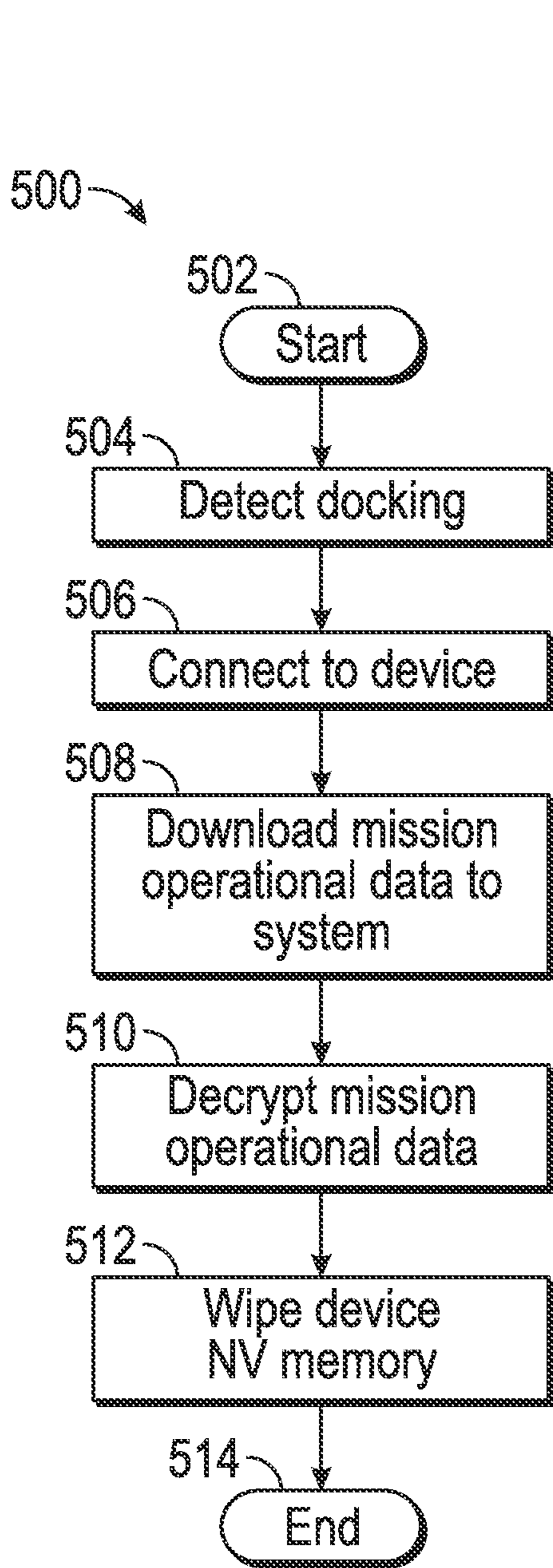


FIG. 5

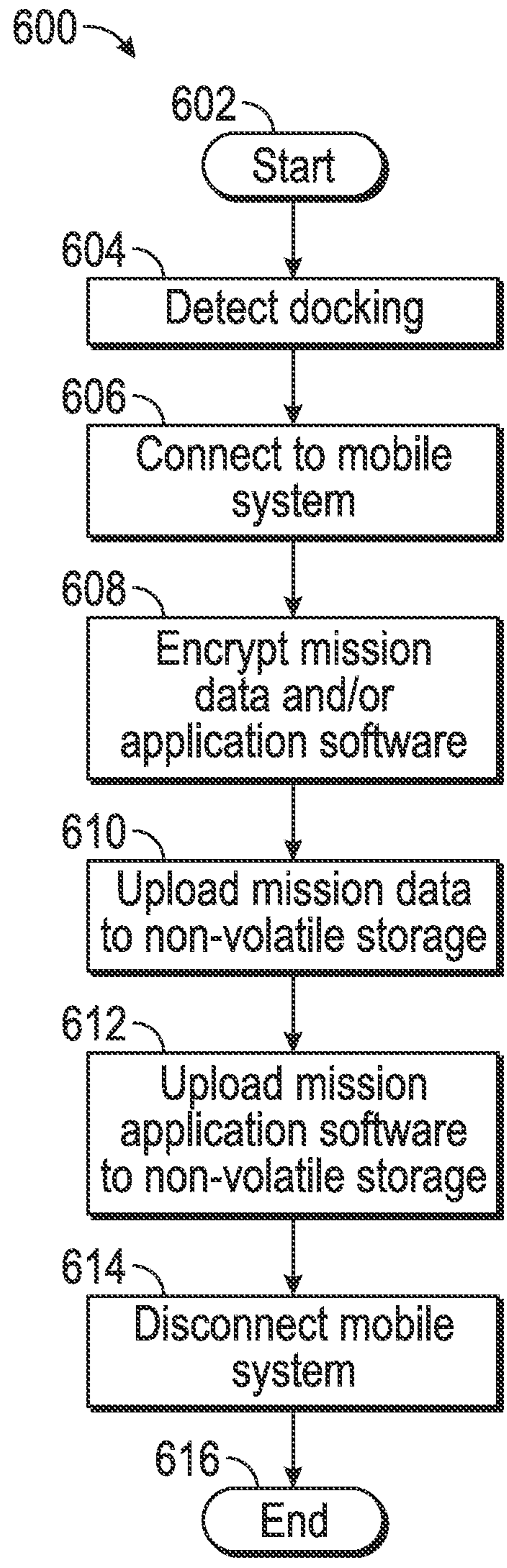


FIG. 6

MOBILE USER INTERFACE SYSTEM AND METHODS THEREFOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of U.S. application Ser. No. 14/579,705 filed Dec. 22, 2014 and titled "MOBILE USER INTERFACE SYSTEM AND METHODS THEREFOR". The parent application is incorporated by reference herein as if reproduced in full below.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to user interfaces in vehicular systems and in particular to mobile devices applied thereto.

BACKGROUND

Modern vehicular systems employed in industrial or military applications rely on onboard computer-based data processing systems for instrumentation, control functions, data collection and interactions with a human operator, including control inputs and instrumentation and data display. Additionally, the onboard system may receive data pertaining to a particular mission as operator-supplied input. The latter typically makes use of specialized mission data cartridges that contain the data uploaded from a mission planning station. The cartridge is then coupled to the vehicle computer system and the mission data loaded into the system. As vehicles with the capability to operate both autonomously and under human control are introduced, the hardware to support both modes of operation adds to the cost of such vehicles. Additionally, each platform may require a customized set of control inputs/outputs (I/O), instrumentation displays and the like. Consequently, there is a need in the art to provide systems and methods to reduce the complexity of the user interface in vehicular platforms and to automate the customization thereof across vehicular platforms.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a detailed description of exemplary embodiments of the invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of a mobile user interface system in accordance with at least some embodiments;

FIG. 2 shows a block diagram of a vehicle computer system in accordance with at least some embodiments;

FIG. 3 (comprised of FIGS. 3A and 3B) shows a flow chart of a method for inter-operating a mobile user interface system and vehicle computer system in accordance with at least some embodiments

FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of an mission planning facility system in accordance with at least some embodiments;

FIG. 5 shows flow chart of a method for retrieving mission information from a mobile user interface system in accordance with at least some embodiments; and

FIG. 6 shows a flow chart of a method for loading mission information in a mobile user interface system in accordance with at least some embodiments.

NOTATION AND NOMENCLATURE

Certain terms are used throughout the following description and claims to refer to particular system components. As

one skilled in the art will appreciate, computer companies may refer to a component by different names. This document does not intend to distinguish between components that differ in name but not function. In the following discussion and in the claims, the terms "including" and "comprising" are used in an open-ended fashion, and thus should be interpreted to mean "including, but not limited to . . ." Also, the term "couple" or "couples" is intended to mean either an indirect, direct, optical or wireless electrical connection. Thus, if a first device couples to a second device, that connection may be through a direct electrical connection, through an indirect electrical connection via other devices and connections, through an optical electrical connection, or through a wireless electrical connection.

"Autonomously" means without human control.

"Autonomous vehicle" means a vehicle capable of operation autonomously over at least a portion of its operating envelope. For the avoidance of doubt, an autonomous vehicle includes a vehicle that may, in at least some configurations and/or portions of its operating envelope, be operated by a human operator.

"Access control data" means data associated with a user against which data input by a user is authenticated to permit access to a system or device. Examples include a user identifier and/or password, a biosensor signature, or the like.

"Biosensor signature" means a digital representation of a physical characteristic associated with a user of a data processing system requiring authenticated access by the user, and by which such authentication may be effected. Exemplary biosensor signatures include a digital representation of the user's finger or thumb print, a digitized retinal scan, or voice print. For the avoidance of doubt, a fingerprint, as used herein shall include a thumbprint.

"Exemplary means "serving as an example, instance, or illustration." An embodiment described herein as "exemplary" is not necessarily to be construed as preferred or advantageous over other embodiments.

"Mission data" means information provided to a vehicle to adapt the vehicle to a particular mission for which the vehicle will be used. Exemplary mission data includes but is not limited to executable programs, configuration data, projected routes, stylistic settings, communication frequencies, encryption keys, weather data, and maps.

"Mission operations data" means information pertaining to a particular mission and generated during the course of the use of the vehicle.

"Mobile user interface system" means a computer system configured to serve as an interface between a user and a vehicle.

"Public key encryption system" means an encryption system in which a pair of keys that are unequal but mathematically related are used. One key of the pair (referred to as the public key) is used to encrypt the data and the second key of the pair (referred to as the private key) is used to recover the original, unencrypted, data from the encrypted data. A public key encryption system may also be referred to an asymmetric key encryption system.

"Vehicle" means an apparatus or device for conveying personnel, materials, good, equipment and the like whether on land, in the air, or at sea, including, but not limited to tracked and wheeled automotive systems, terrestrial hovercraft, aircraft, marine vessels including, for example, marine and amphibious hovercraft, ships and submersible vessels.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following discussion is directed to various embodiments of the invention. Although one or more of these

embodiments may be preferred, the embodiments disclosed should not be interpreted, or otherwise used, as limiting the scope of the disclosure, including the claims. In addition, one skilled in the art will understand that the following description has broad application, and the discussion of any embodiment is meant only to be exemplary of that embodiment, and not intended to intimate that the scope of the disclosure, including the claims, is limited to that embodiment.

Refer now to FIG. 1 illustrating a mobile user interface system **100** in accordance with a least some embodiments of the principles of the disclosure. Mobile user interface system **100** may be used with a vehicle computer system which will be described below in conjunction with FIG. 2. A device embodying a system **100** may be mechanically configured in a laptop or tablet personal computer (PC) form factor. Mobile user interface system **100** includes a processor (CPU) **102** coupled to non-volatile random access memory (NVRAM) **104** via a memory interface **106**. NVRAM **104** may store programming instructions and data. In particular, the programming instructions stored in NVRAM **104** may include instructions that are executed on CPU **102**. Also, programming instructions to be executed on the vehicle computer system via a download to the vehicle system, as described further below, may be stored as data in NVRAM **104**. Data stored in NVRAM may also include data that is used by the vehicle computer system in the course of a particular mission.

Software stored in NVRAM for execution by the local CPU, CPU **102** may be lightweight software for performing the data management and interface operations of system **100** as described further below. By way of example, in at least some embodiments, software stored in NVRAM **104** may include program instructions for implementing an ARINC 661 display system and a Future Airborne Capability Environment (FACE) common operating environment. ARINC 661 is an aviation-industry cockpit display system standard promulgated by ARINC Industry Activities (ARINC-IA). ARINC-IA is a program of SAE Industry Technologists Consortia (SAE ITC), Warrendale, Pa. FACE is a set of aviation-industry standards to promote software interoperability, portability and security across aviation platforms promulgated by the FACE Consortium, a member organization of The Open Group, San Francisco, Calif. and Burlington, Mass. CPU **102** may be coupled to NVRAM **104** via a memory interface **106** which manages reads from and writes to NVRAM **104**. Further memory interface **104** may provide direct memory access (DMA) to NVRAM **104** as described further below.

Memory interface **106** may also be coupled to RAM **108**. RAM **108** may be, for example, dynamic ram which may store data to be displayed on display **110**. In at least some embodiments of system **100**, a graphics processor (GPU) **112** may be used to render graphics to be displayed, thereby reducing the workload on CPU **102**. GPU **112** may comprise logic for implementing a graphics rendering application program interface (API) such as OpenGL. OpenGL is an API for rendering 2D and 3D vector graphics promulgated by the Kronos Group, Beaverton, Oreg. GPU **112** may be coupled to display **110** by a display interface **114**. For example, in an embodiment in which display **110** comprises a liquid crystal display (LCD) technology, display interface **114** may include an LCD controller. In an embodiment of a mobile user interface system without a GPU, CPU **102** may be coupled to display interface **114** and display information generated by software executed on CPU **102**. Although a

single display is shown in FIG. 1, in at least some embodiments multiple displays may be included.

In at least some embodiments, data and software program instructions may be stored in NVRAM **104** in encrypted form. Encryption engine **116** may then provide, for example, decryption services to provide decrypted instructions to CPU **102** for execution. Encryption engine **116** may employ a public key encryption system in whereby program instructions may be encrypted using a public key associated with a particular system **100** by an external system and uploaded to the particular system **100**, as described further below in conjunction with FIG. 2. The encrypted instructions, when fetched by CPU **102** for execution, are decrypted by encryption engine **116** using the private key associated with the particular system. The private key may be stored in the hardware of encryption engine **116**, by, for example, fusing the key into the encryption engine at the time of manufacture. Because the public key need not be secured, it can be delivered to say a mission planning system by any suitable method and associated with a particular mobile user interface system using, for example, a serial number of the system.

A user-authorization mechanism may be embodied in a biosensor interface **118** which may connect system **100** to an external biosensor **120**. As described further below in conjunction with FIG. 2, biosensor **120** may be included in a vehicle docking station configured to receive mobile user interface system **100** and provide electrical and mechanical couplings thereto. Exemplary embodiments of a biosensor **120** include a retinal scan device and a fingerprint scan device. Biosensor interface **118** may receive data from biosensor **120** on input **121** and communicate it via bridge logic **122** to CPU **102** for comparison with biosensor data associated with a particular user, which may be stored in NVRAM **104**. Such biosensor data may be stored in encrypted form, similar to programming instructions, as described above. In such an embodiment, encryption engine **116** may decrypt the data prior to the data being loaded into CPU **102**. Biosensor data associated with a particular user may be loaded into NVRAM in conjunction with other mission data as described further below in conjunction with FIG. 6. In this way, any device embodying mobile user interface system **100** may be associated with a given user at the time that user initiates a mission.

Other user-authorization mechanisms may also be used. An access control interface **123** coupled to bridge logic **122** may be used as an alternative to or in conjunction with biosensor interface **121** to limit access to system **100** to authorized users. For example, access control interface **123** may comprise a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag or card reader. In at least some embodiments, such an access control interface **123** may operate in conjunction with the Common Access Card issued by the U.S. Government. Access control may also be by username and password entered on a keyboard coupled to a docking station that connected to system **100** as described further below in conjunction with FIG. 2.

Bridge logic **122** also provides an interface to one or more peripheral buses, such as buses **124**, **126** and **128**. Peripheral buses **124-128** may be used for data communication between system **100** and external devices. In other words, peripheral bus **124** may provide a communication network link between mobile user interface system **100** and a peripheral network bus coupled, via an external data communication network, to external devices or systems, exemplary embodiments of which are described further below in conjunction with FIGS. 2 and 3. Peripheral bus **128** is shown

coupled to a wireless network interface **130**. Wireless network interface provides an interconnection of system **100** with a wireless network, such as an industry-standard IEEE 802.11 network. Exemplary embodiments of peripheral buses **124**, **126** and **128** include a Peripheral Component Interface Express (PCIe) bus promulgated by the PCI-SIG, Beaverton, Oreg., and a Universal Serial Bus (USB) promulgated by the USB Implementers Forum (USB-IF), Portland, Oreg. In at least some embodiments, bridge logic **122** may be coupled to memory interface **106** via a DMA controller **132**, thereby effecting access to NVRAM **104** without the involvement of CPU **102**. In some embodiments, DMA controller **132** may be incorporated within bridge logic **122**. Further, encryption engine **116** may be configured to bypass DMA reads so that encrypted data stored in NVRAM **104** cannot be retrieved in unencrypted form.

Power for mobile user interface system **100** may be obtained from an internal battery **134**. Power module **136** conditions the battery power and performs any voltage level shifting as may be required by the various devices in system **100**. Power is supplied to the devices via power bus **138** which may be a multi-conductor bus based on the power requirements of the various devices. Power may also be provided from an external source power connection **140** that, for example, may couple to a vehicle primary electrical power source. Further, power module **136** may include circuitry for charging battery **134** when connected to the vehicle primary power source.

To further appreciate the mobile user interface system **100**, refer now to FIG. 2 illustrating, in a high-level block diagram, a vehicle computer system **200** in accordance with at least some embodiments. Vehicle computer system **200** includes at least one processor (CPU) **202**. A memory interface **204**, which may, in some embodiments, be integrated with CPU **202**, couples CPU **202** to RAM **206**. In at least some embodiments, a portion of RAM **206** may comprise non-volatile storage. RAM **206** may store software application program instructions for execution by CPU **202** as well as data for use by the software applications or other devices in the vehicle in which the vehicle computer system **200** is deployed. In particular, RAM **206** may store mission related software applications and data as uploaded to vehicle computer system **200** from mobile user interface system **100** as described further below. For example, mission related software applications may include software to customize the instrumentation displayed to the user based on user preferences, mission requirements and the like. An encryption engine **207** may decrypt and/or encrypt data as described further below in conjunction with FIG. 3. Although encryption engine **207** is shown as incorporated in CPU **202**, in at least some embodiments encryption engine **207** may be a separate hardware device and in still other embodiments may be implemented in software stored in a non-volatile portion of RAM **206**.

Bridge logic **208** couples memory interface **204** to one or more peripheral buses **210**. Peripheral buses **210** provide data communication links between memory interface **204**, and peripheral devices such as input/output (I/O) devices **212** and docking station **214**. Similar to buses **124-128**, peripheral buses **210** may include, by way of example, industry-standard buses such as PCIe buses, and USB buses. However, computer system **200** is not limited to such buses and any suitable bus may be used. In this way, CPU **202** can send data to and receive data from the various peripheral devices. Bridge logic **208** may also provide DMA service to RAM **206** through DMA controller logic incorporated therein. Further, I/O devices **212** are not limited to user-

oriented devices such as keyboard, printers, trackpads and the like, but may also include sensors and/or instrumentation electronics, vehicle automation controllers, digital and/or analog communication systems, controller area network devices and the like (which may collectively be referred to as “vehicle I/O sensors”) that may be sending and receiving data to CPU **202** with respect to the state of electrical and mechanical systems onboard a vehicle in which system **200** is deployed. For a description of a peripheral bus system and associated I/O devices that may be used in conjunction with vehicle computer system **200**, reference may be made to co-pending, commonly-owned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/567,143, titled “Ring-based Network Interconnect” which is incorporated by reference as if fully reproduced herein.

Docking station **214** may provide electrical connections to mobile user interface system **100**. It may also include fixtures (not shown in FIG. 2) to secure mobile user interface system **100** to the vehicle in which vehicle computer system **200** is deployed, and to isolate the system from mechanical stresses that might otherwise be imposed during operation of the vehicle. Electrical connections may include power and data connections. Docking station **214** may be connected to the vehicle primary power bus **216** which may then connect the vehicle primary power to external source power connection **140**. Docking station **214** may also include user-centric I/O devices such as bezel keys **218** and indicators **220**, which may include tactile feedback to the user, emergency display of information, and the like. Docking station **214** may also provide for connections to other user I/O devices such as a keyboard and trackpad **222** and similar pointing and data entry devices such as joysticks and hands-on-throttle and stick (HOTAS) controls. Biosensor **120** may also be included in docking station **214**, as previously described. A memory interface **224** may provide a bus connection **226** to an external memory device such as a USB memory stick, CDROM reader, solid-state or mechanical hard drives, SD cards, CF cards, and the like.

A power module **228** connected to the vehicle primary power supply conditions the vehicle power and performs any voltage level shifting as may be required by the various devices in system **200**, and supplies the devices via power bus **238** which may be a multi-conductor bus based on the power requirements of the various devices.

In at least some embodiments of a vehicle computer system, a native display device may not be included. For example, such embodiments may be deployed in autonomous vehicles in which a fixed display device is superfluous during autonomous operation and adds weight and cost to the vehicle. However, such embodiments without a fixed display device need not be limited to autonomous vehicles.

Turning now to FIG. 3, there is shown a flowchart of a method **300** for the inter-operation of a user interface system and a vehicle computer system as exemplified by mobile user interface system **100** and vehicle computer system **200**, respectively. Method **300** begins at block **302**. In block **304**, a docking to the vehicle computer system is detected. Docking may be detected by a hot-plug in an embodiment in a PCIe or, alternatively a USB context. In other embodiments a switch in the docking station may be closed by insertion of the mobile user interface system into the docking station. Closing the switch may generate an interrupt and poll-able signal to the vehicle system. The foregoing are exemplary and any suitable mechanism to signal the docking to the vehicle system may be used. In block **306**, the mobile user interface system is connected to the vehicle computer system via a vehicle data communication network, and

registered on the vehicle network with its capabilities, such as an ARINC 661 display system, for example. For example, when the vehicle system detects the mobile interface on the vehicle system network, the mobile system may be polled for a list of capabilities it provides. For example, the mobile user interface system may maintain a public pointer in its address space on the vehicle system network, and, at that address, provide its capabilities. Such capabilities may include ARINC 661 display, mission data loader and mission data store capabilities. The vehicle system may then start software resident on the vehicle system based on these enumerated types. For example, the vehicle system may start a mission data loader application that downloads mission related data and/or application software from the mobile user interface system to the vehicle computer system, block **308**. The data and application software may be stored in NVRAM in the mobile user interface system and may comprise data and applications that pertain to a particular operation or mission that the user is undertaking. Stated otherwise, the mobile user interface system provides a mechanism to configure the vehicle for a particular mission just prior to initiating an operation. Configuration of the vehicle may include, for example, the addition of mission-related hardware packages and at least a portion of the downloaded application software and/or data comprises software and/or data associated with such hardware packages.

Further, in operating environments in which security is important, the application software and data may be stored in the NVRAM of the mobile user interface system in encrypted form. In block **310** the data and/or application software are decrypted. An encryption engine in the vehicle computer system may decrypt the data and application software. In particular, the data and application software may be encrypted with a public key encryption system using a public encryption key associated with the particular vehicle. The encryption engine may use the associated private key to perform the decryption. The private key may be fused into the encryption engine at the time of manufacture thereby obviating the entry of the private key by manual methods that might be subject to compromise.

In block **312**, user input authentication data, which may, for example, be biosensor scan data from a biosensor in the in the vehicle docking station or may be other user input authentication data such as a user identifier and password entered via a keyboard in or connected to the vehicle docking station, is received. The user input authentication data is authenticated in block **314**. The access control data, such as a biosensor signature or user identifier and password, in at least some embodiments may be included in the mission data stored in mobile interface system NVRAM and downloaded at block **308**. If the user input authentication data received in block **312** authenticates against the access control data, the biosensor signature for example, method **300** proceeds by the “Yes” branch of block **314** to block **316**.

Turning now to block **316**, if the vehicle includes a fixed display device, block **316** proceeds by the “Yes” branch and loops through block **318** until the mission ends, at block **320**. In block **318**, data mission operations data is collected for subsequent analysis, as described further below. At the end of the mission, method **300** breaks out of the loop via the “Yes” branch of block **320**.

Returning to block **316**, if the vehicle does not include a fixed display device, block **316** proceeds by the “No” branch to block **322**. In block **322**, control data is received from vehicle instrumentation via I/O devices in the vehicle computer system, as described above in conjunction with FIG. 2.

Control data is displayed on a display device which may be in the mobile user interface system, for example display **110**, FIG. 1, block **324**. At least a portion of the control data displayed may be customized for the particular mission using software applications downloaded at block **308**. Control data may, in at least some embodiments, conform to the ARINC 661 specification, and, accordingly, displayed under the control of software instructions stored in the NVRAM of the mobile user interface system implementing an ARINC 661 compliant display system, and executed on the CPU and/or GPU of the mobile user interface system. Recall, as described in conjunction with block **306**, the mobile user interface system may provide an ARINC 661 display capability to the vehicle system when the mobile user interface system is detected on the vehicle system network. Based on this capability, the vehicle system may then start an ARINC 661 display system whereby the vehicle system sends display data to the mobile user interface system. Alternatively, in at least some embodiments in which a peripheral bus, such as a peripheral bus **124** or **126** comprises a video bus, such as DisplayPort bus promulgated by the Video Electronics Standards Association (VESA), Newark, Calif., or an ARINC-818 bus promulgated by ARINC-IA, the display data may be generated by the CPU in the vehicle system and communicated to the mobile user interface on the video bus.

Method **300** then proceeds to block **318**, to collect mission operations data in block **318**, and loops through blocks **322**, **324** and **318** via the “No” branch of block **320** until breaking out of the loop via the “Yes” branch of block **320**. In this way, a vehicle, such as an autonomous vehicle, may be configured to operate under human control in accordance with the at least some embodiments of the principles of the disclosure. For example, a vehicle may be capable of autonomously traveling to a fueling station to be refueled and returning to an operations area for deployment on a mission.

On breaking out of the loop via the “Yes” branch of block **320**, the mission application software and/or data downloaded at block **308** is deleted, block **326**. At block **328**, method **300** may be configured to encrypt the mission operations data collected at block **318** prior to uploading that data to the mobile user interface system. For example, in an embodiment of a vehicle computer system in which encryption is implemented in software and hardware-based encryption is provided in the mobile system, encryption of the mission operations data might be deferred until the data is uploaded to the mobile user interface system. If method **300** is configured to encrypt the mission operations data prior to upload, then block **328** proceeds by the “Yes” branch and the mission operation data collected at block **318** is encrypted, in block **330**.

An encryption engine such as encryption engine **207** may be used to encrypt the data in at least some embodiments. The mission operations data may be encrypted with a public key encryption system using a public encryption key associated with a secure data processing system located at a base mission planning facility, for example. Because the encryption key is a public key, it does not need to be stored securely and, in an embodiment of a vehicle computer system such as vehicle computer system **200**, may be stored in RAM **206**. The public key may, for example, be included in mission data downloaded in block **308**. The mission data may be uploaded in encrypted form to the mobile user interface system, block **332**.

Alternatively, method **300** may be configured to upload the mission operations data to the mobile user interface system in unencrypted form. In such an embodiment,

method 300 proceeds by the “No” branch in block 328 and the mission operations data is uploaded to the mobile system in unencrypted form in block 332. If the data is unencrypted upon upload to the mobile system, method 300 proceeds by the “No” branch in block 334 and the mission operations data is encrypted at block 336. The data may be encrypted by an encryption engine in the mobile user interface system, e.g. encryption engine 116, FIG. 1. As before, a public key encryption system may be used in conjunction with a public key associated with a secure data processing system at, say, a base mission planning facility. The mission operations data may then be stored, at block 338, in encrypted form in, for example, the non-volatile RAM of the mobile system such as NVRAM 104, for later retrieval, as described below. Method 300 ends at block 340.

Returning now to block 314, if the user input authentication data fails to authenticate, block 314, method 300 proceeds by the “No” branch of block 314 to block 342. In block 342, the authentication error is reported to the user. To account for the possibility of read errors in a biosensor or other access control device, at block 344, a predetermined number, N, of retries are admitted. Although N may be any predetermined number, typically N would be small, say three for example, in at least some embodiments. However, any predetermined number may be used. If N retries have not been reached, block 344 falls through the “No” branch and returns to block 312 where user input authentication data is received. The user input authentication data is again authenticated, block 314. Method 300 then loops through blocks 314, 342, 344 and 312 until the user input authentication data either (i) authenticates at block 314, or (ii) the number of retries, N is exceeded, at block 344. If the number of retries is exceeded, then block 344 falls through the “Yes” branch, the vehicle system is locked, at block 348, and the user notified that the system is locked, at block 350. Method 300 ends at block 340.

It will be readily appreciated that although blocks 302-350 are depicted serially for ease of illustration, the actions therein are not necessarily performed serially, but may be performed substantially in parallel. For example, the reception and display of control information may be performed in parallel with the collection of mission operations data at blocks 322, 324 and 318. Other actions may also be performed in parallel.

Mission operations data may be retrieved from a mobile user interface system at a mission planning system. Such a mission planning system may be located at a base facility, for example. Referring now to FIG. 4, in at least some embodiments, a mission planning system 400 comprises a mission planning server system 402 having one or more docking stations 404 coupled thereto. A mission planning server system 402 may comprise a secure data processing system. A mobile user interface system 100 may be docked to a docking station 404 which provides a data input/output connection between system 100 and mission planning server system 402 via a peripheral network bus 406. Peripheral network bus 406 may, for example, comprise one or more of a PCIe bus, USB bus, IEEE 802.3 (Ethernet) bus or an IEEE 802.11 (wireless) link, both promulgated by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), Piscataway, N.J. Docking station 404 may also provide electrical power to mobile user interface system 100 via a power bus 408. In a post-mission process, mission planning server system 402 may retrieve mission operations data from mobile user interface system 100 for subsequent analysis.

A flowchart of a method 500 for retrieving mission operations data in accordance with at least some embodi-

ments is shown in FIG. 5. Method 500 starts at block 502, and in block 504 docking of a mobile user interface system is detected. Analogous to block 310, FIG. 3, in block 506 the mobile user interface system is connected to a mission planning server system. The connection may be through a peripheral bus such as one of peripheral buses 124 and 126, FIG. 1. In block 508, the mission operations data is downloaded from the mobile user interface system. Such data may, as previously described, be in encrypted form, and in particular, encrypted with a public key system using the public key of a secure data processing system such as a mission planning server system 402. At block 510, encrypted mission operations data is decrypted. The decryption may use the private key associated with the public key of the secure data processing system. The private key may be stored on the secure data processing system, such as a mission planning server system 402. Although information is stored in the NVRAM of the mobile user interface system, as an added security measure, method 500 may “wipe”, e.g. overwrite with all zeros, the non-volatile random access memory of the mobile user interface system at block 512. Method 500 ends at block 514.

As described above, a mobile user interface system may be used to load mission data and/or application software into a vehicle computer system. The mission planning server system 402 may store such data and software and may be used to load the data and software into the mobile user interface system. Mission data may include a biosensor signature and/or other access control data, such as a user identifier and password, of the user assigned the mission. This access control data may be compared with user input authentication data, such as digitized biosensor data from a biosensor in the vehicle computer system as described above. A flowchart of a method 600 for loading mission data and/or application software is shown in FIG. 6.

Method 600 starts at block 602. In block 604, docking of a mobile user interface system is detected. The mobile user interface system is connected to the operations center server system in block 606. Analogous to block 506 in method 500, a connection may be effected through a peripheral bus in the mobile user interface system. The mission data and/or application software is encrypted at block 608. The encryption may, in at least some embodiments, use a public key encryption system and a public key associated with the particular vehicle where the mission data and/or application software will be deployed. As described above in conjunction with FIG. 3, the vehicle computer system may securely store in hardware the private key of the vehicle public-private key pair, obviating entry of the private key by methods that might be subject to compromise. In block 610, encrypted mission data is downloaded to the non-volatile random access memory in the mobile user interface system. Encrypted mission application software, if any, is downloaded to the non-volatile random access memory in the mobile user interface system in block 612. The mobile user interface system is disconnected from the operations center server system, block 614 and method 600 ends at block 616.

The above discussion is meant to be illustrative of the principles and various embodiments of the present invention. Numerous variations and modifications will become apparent to those skilled in the art once the above disclosure is fully appreciated. For example, a vehicle may employ multiple vehicle computer systems configured similarly, but not necessarily identically, to the exemplary system in FIG. 2. It is intended that the following claims be interpreted to embrace all such variations and modifications.

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What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

connecting a mobile computer system to a vehicle computer system, wherein the vehicle computer system does not include a display device;

receiving, by the mobile computer system, mission operations data comprising access control data for accessing via an access control interface of the mobile computer system the mission operations data by user input authentication data available as a common access card issued by the U.S. government, and wherein the mission operations data is further customized for a particular mission from the vehicle computer system, the mission operations data customized for a particular mission generated by one or more vehicle I/O sensors coupled to the vehicle computer system;

displaying the mission operations data customized for a particular mission on a display device of the mobile computer system;

detecting docking of a plurality of mobile computer systems, one of which is the mobile computer system and the remainder of which are other mobile computer systems excluding the mobile computer system, to a mission planning server system located at a base facility;

downloading the mission operations data from the vehicle computer system in parallel and simultaneously with other mission operations data from corresponding the other mobile computer systems to the mission planning server system; and

wiping the mission operation data from non-volatile memory within the mobile computer system by overwriting with all zeros.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

downloading mission data from the non-volatile random access memory in the mobile computer system to the vehicle computer system.

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3. The method of claim 2 wherein the mission data is stored in the non-volatile random access memory in encrypted form; and

the method further comprises decrypting the mission data.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein the mission data comprises the access control data associated with a preselected user, the method further comprising:

receiving the user input authentication data; and

authenticating the user input authentication data against the access control data.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the receiving control data customized for a particular mission and the displaying the control data customized for a particular mission is enabled in response to authenticating the input authentication data.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

collecting mission operations data on the vehicle computer system, the mission operations data generated by one or more vehicle I/O sensors coupled to the vehicle computer system; and

uploading the mission operations data to the mobile computing system.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising encrypting the mission operations data, the mission operations data stored in non-volatile random access memory of the mobile computer system in encrypted form.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the encrypting employs a public key encryption system using a public key associated with a mission planning system.

9. The method of claim 4 wherein the access control data comprises a biosensor signature, and wherein:

receiving the user input authentication data comprises receiving biosensor scan data from a biosensor coupled to the vehicle computer system; and

authenticating the user input authentication data against the access control data comprises authenticating the biosensor scan data against the biosensor signature.

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